

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4651

C O N F I D E N T I A L NOUAKTOTT 2326

STADIS//////////

FOR DEPUTY ASST. SECY. NAEHER FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: AFSP, MR

SUBJ: WATTS: NEXT STEPS TO A RELIABLE COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM

1. LAST FRIDAY EMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT WAS ONCE AGAIN CUT OFF FROM THE OUTSIDE WORLD, THE LATEST IN A CONTINUING SERIES OF COMMUNICATIONS FAILURES. THE OPERATING COMPLEXITIES AND IDIOSYNCRACIES OF OUR TECHNICALLY HAND-SOME NEW WATTS STATION BESTED OUR PROFESSIONALLY EXCELLENT ROVING COMMUNICATOR. UNARMED WITH TEN MONTHS OF DAY-IN-DAY-OUT OPERATING EXPERIENCE WITH OUR ENGINEERS' DREAM BUT OPERATORS' BETE NOIRE, AND UNABLE TO CATER TO ITS FICKLENESSES OR DISCIPLINE ITS INTRACTABILITY, HE COULD NOT GET THE STATION BACK ON THE AIR. RESULT WAS AN UNPLEASANT FRIDAY NIGHT FOR COMMUNICATORS FROM NOUAKCHOTT TO WASHINGTON VIA NIAMEY, PARIS, AND BONN.

2. REACTING TO THIS MOST RECENT EPISODE, EMBASSY NIAMEY HAS VIGOROUSLY RECOMMENDED THE ASSIGNMENT OF TWO WATTS-TRAINED COMMUNICATORS TO EVERY WATTS STATION (NIAMEY 4385). WE IN TURN, AFTER WARMLY ENDORSING NIAMEY'S POSAL, THEN RECOMMENDED THE REWRITING OF ALL WATTS COMMUNICATOR JOB DESCRIPTIONS TO STIPULATE POSSESSION OF THE EXTENSIVE TECHNICAL INTEREST (BENT), EXPERIENCE, AND COMPETENCE WHICH EXPERIENCE HAS PAINFULLY DEMONSTRATED ARE ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL TO MAINTENANCE OF UNINTERRUPTED

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COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN WATTS EMBASSIES AND WASHINGTON

(NOUAKCHOTT 2321).

3. TO THIS NONTECHNICAL OBSERVER AND VITALLY CONCERNED CONSUMER, IT WOULD APPEAR THAT WE HAVE SUCCESSFULLY WORKED OUR WAY THROUGH THE TECHNICAL ASSIMILATION OF A COMPLEX PIECE OF NEW EQUIPMENT, BUT HAVE ONLY JUST BEGUN THE EQUALLY COMPLEX AND DIFFICULT PROCESS OF ASSIMILATING THIS NEW SYSTEM INTO OUR FOREIGN SERVICE COMMUNICATIONS OPERATION. WHILE COLLINS HAS PROVIDED A SHELF FULL OF DIAGRAMS AND TECH MANUALS, WE HAVE NOT YET, APPARENTLY, DESIGNED OR SET UP AN EFFECTIVE WATTS OPERATIONS TRAINING PROGRAM, WRITTEN THE REQUIRED SET OF DETAILED OPERATING "SOP'S", NOR PUT TOGETHER A WATTS OPERATING CONTINGENCY MANUAL. (THE QUALIFIED BUT UNSEASONED WATTS COMMUNICATOR CLEARLY NEEDS A HANDBOOK WHICH SPELLS OUT A SERIES OF DIAGNOSTIC AND CORRECTIVE PROCEDURES IN A KIND OF HOW-TO-DO-IT "IF THE EQUIPMENT DOES THIS OR DOES NOT DO THAT, YOU SHOULD TRY THIS OR THAT".) IT IS ENTIRELY POSSIBLE THAT NO ONE AT COLLINS OR IN OC-WASHINGTON COULD AT THIS POINT WRITE SUCH A CONTINGENCY HANDBOOK; THEY HAVE NOT HAD THE REQUIRED DAY-TO-DAY OPERATING EXPERIENCE. INDEED, ONLY THE FOUR OR FIVE COMMUNICATIONS TECHNICIAN/OPERATORS WHO FOR TEN PLUS MONTHS HAVE NURSED THE WATTS STATIONS INTO A GENERALLY EFFECTIVE COMMO SYSTEM HAVE PROBABLY ACCUMULATED THE INTENSIVE TECHNICAL AND OPERATIONAL EXPERIENCE TO PRODUCE SUCH A HANDBOOK. PERHAPS THERE IS SOME WAY THAT OC COULD COMMISSION COLLINS TO DRAW ON THIS RESERVOIR OF EXPERTISES, COLLECT THE CRITICALLY NEEDED OPERATIONS LORE, AND SHAPE IT INTO AN OPERATORS HANDBOOK.

4. IN ANY EVENT, I EARNESTLY HOPE THAT YOU WILL TAKE FEW MINUTES TO READ AND REFLECT ON THE NIAMEY AND NOUAKCHOTT TELEGRAMS, AND THEN SCHEDULE A SESSION WITH AF EXECUTIVE DIRETOR KYRZA WHOSE EAR MANAGEMENT, ADMINISTRATION, AND COMMUNICATORS HAVE INTENSIVELY BENT ON THIS PROBLEM DURING HIS BRIEF VISIT HERE.HANDYSIDE

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